

*This Week in Washington*



WITH CONGRESSMAN  
JO BONNER

### One Vote Makes a Difference

As Americans prepare to take to the polls and exercise their most basic civic duty in just a few days, the idea that their vote could be cancelled out by an illegal vote is unconscionable and violates the very foundation of our democracy.

It seems almost daily new reports of voter fraud are coming to light. Most notably, it was reported in recent weeks that “Mickey Mouse” was registered to vote in Orange County, Florida.

But, there have been even more bizarre reports of voter fraud throughout the country, including:

- “Two Ohio voters, including Domino's pizza worker Christopher Barkley, claimed yesterday that they were hounded by the community-activist group ACORN to register to vote several times, even though they made it clear they'd already signed up.” (New York Post, 10/9/08)

- "ACORN submitted more than 800 phony registration forms in Independence, Mo., with one woman registering 10 times, using three birthdates, four different Social Security numbers and six different phone numbers." (New York Post, 10/9/08)

- "The secretary of state's office launched an investigation after noticing that names did not match addresses and that most members of the Dallas Cowboys appeared to be registering in Nevada to vote in November's general election." (Las Vegas Review-Journal, 10/8/08)

Due to the numerous allegations of voting fraud, I joined 38 of my colleagues in writing to Attorney General Michael Mukasey last month requesting an immediate investigation into whether or not the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) is engaging in criminal voting fraud, promoting fraudulent registrations, or criminally misusing taxpayer funds.

In our letter, we stated, "Voter fraud represents a serious threat to the validity of all American elections. Each and every illegal vote cast cancels out the thoughtfully considered vote of an American citizen."

The integrity of our federal elections is the foundation of our democracy, and the vote of every American must be counted.

It can be easy to take for granted the fundamental right to vote in a free election. Finding time in our busy schedules to go to the polls can be difficult, and at the end of a long day, some may be inclined not to make the trip to the voting booth.

Some may think, "What is the big deal? Can one vote really make a difference?"

Friends, one vote – your vote – truly can make a difference. Consider just a few examples from history:

- One vote made Texas part of the United States. One vote also added Alaska.

- One vote determined that the United States would speak English, not German.

- One vote elected Thomas Jefferson president in 1800.

- In 1960, President John F. Kennedy beat Richard Nixon by less than one vote per voting precinct in the United States.

- We learned in 2000 that just one state can determine a presidential election.

- In 2004, one vote secured reelection for Guntersville, Alabama, Mayor James Towson.

History is filled with examples of how one vote can and does make a difference.

Yet, voting rates across the country and throughout Alabama remain low.

While voter turnout in 2006 was the highest since 1994 when the Census Bureau first began collecting this information, only 50.6 percent of registered voters in Alabama went to the polls, which is slightly higher than the national turnout of 48 percent.

The primary elections are even more dismal. In this year's primary election, a paltry 13.8 percent of registered Alabama voters cast a ballot, and only 3.9 percent of registered voters returned to the polls for the primary runoff.

We can do better. We should do better.

As reports of voter fraud continue to be uncovered, it is important to realize that just one stolen vote can make the difference in this year's election.

Just last week, with the election just days away, the FBI announced it is investigating whether ACORN has violated federal election law.

I am pleased that the Department of Justice is taking this important step to ensure the integrity of our elections – counting your vote and not Mickey Mouse's.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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